

Torture from Above: Is Portland Home to CIA Torture Plane?

Schneider, Josef, Potland Mercury, 31 March 2005.

Studded with hand-built cornices and elegant stone masonry, the Pittock building at SW Washington and 10th may look grand from the outside, but inside could be a link to some of the most sinister practices in the Bush administration.

Suite 755 in the Pittock Building is the home of Bayard Foreign Marketing--the legal owner of a Gulfstream V private jet that operates out of Washington's Dulles Airport, and in the past has had permission to land at any US military airfield. Under its previous owners--Premier Executive Transport of Dedham, Massachusetts--this jet became notorious for what the federal government calls "extraordinary renditions." Or, more precisely, transfer of terrorism suspects to foreign countries reportedly for the purposes of torture. Even more curious, there are no documents that proves its current owner even exists.

After the east coast press caught hold of the story several months ago and publicized the Gulfstream's owners and their ties to rogue CIA interrogation practices, the plane was sold from the Massachusetts company to Bayard Foreign Marketing. Now that it resides in Portland, it remains unclear if the plane is still being used for nefarious purposes.

These "extraordinary renditions" began in the late '90s and became more frequent after 9/11. Persons suspected of having information about a terrorist organization or plot are captured in a foreign country and turned over to American agents who, in turn, bundle their captives aboard a civilian aircraft--a Gulfstream. According to numerous accounts from international agencies, these terrorism suspects ultimately are not brought to the U.S. for questioning or trial, but are instead delivered to places like Egypt, Jordan, and Syria for interrogation--which have reportedly used torture. This practice violates most every international treaty.

Take, for example, an incident in December 2001, first reported by Sweden's TV4. When two Egyptian dissidents were arrested by Swedish police, both had been granted asylum in Sweden. But, even so, with no chance to contest their arrest before a judge, they were brought to Stockholm's airport, where they were turned over to disguised American agents. The Americans cut off their clothes, put hoods over their heads, inserted sedative suppositories into their anuses, and dressed them in diapers and jumpsuits.

The two captives were then placed on a white, 14-passenger, twin-engine, luxury jet favored by the executives of large corporations--a Gulfstream V with the US civilian tail number N379P--then flown to Cairo. According to the mens' attorney, once in the hands of the Egyptian government, both were tortured using sleep deprivation, beatings, and electrical shock.

A month later, the plane surfaced again in Jakarta when Indonesian police put Muhammad Saad Iqbal on board. He was flown to Egypt and handed over to police. He has not been heard from since, but various intelligence agencies reported he died during interrogation.

All told, there have been over a hundred such cases--all tied to Gulfstreams.

On December 1, 2004, soon after the story of the CIA Gulfstream was reported in the US by the Boston Globe and Washington Post, the plane's registration number was changed to N44982 and Premier sold it to Bayard Foreign Marketing, a corporation headquartered in Portland and, according to papers filed with the Oregon Secretary of State, owned by Leonard T. Bayard.

But the problem is that no record of any such person in Oregon exists. The Washington Post could not find Bayard's name in any public records. After an investigation by The Chicago Tribune, reporter John Crewdson wrote: "A search of commercial databases turned up no information on Leonard Thomas Bayard: no residence address, no telephone number, no Social Security number, no credit history, no automobile or property ownership records--in short, none of the information commonly associated with real people."

But someone had to file papers with the Secretary of State, and that person was Scott D. Caplan, a Portland attorney. Interestingly, the alleged Bayard suite in the Pittock Building is also Scott Caplan's law office. (Caplan did not return phone calls from the Mercury.)

Yet, in spite of these connections, local authorities have chosen to let the filing of suspicious papers slide. Kevin Neely, an attorney with the Oregon Attorney General's office said that they had no plans to investigate Caplan and Bayard Foreign Marketing because, he said, "at most this would be a class B misdemeanor." He added, "It would be up to the District Attorney where the violation allegedly occurred to decide if it was worth it to investigate."

Because the incorporation papers were filed in Salem, this leaves the investigation to the Marion County DA. But they also are choosing not to investigate Caplan.

###